REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Office of the
Representative for Children and Youth

Service Plan
2012/13 to 2014/15

REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

November 9, 2011

The Honourable Bill Barisoff
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my pleasure to present the 2012/13 to 2014/15 Service Plan of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to the Legislative Assembly.

This report covers the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2015 and has been prepared in accordance with part 5, section 17 of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth
Province of British Columbia

pc: Mr. Craig James
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Ms. Joan McIntyre, MLA
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Message from the Representative for Children and Youth

In a perfect world all children would grow up in a nurturing, healthy and safe environment supported by their parents, family, community and society as a whole. But because of things that may happen in their young lives, some children and youth are more vulnerable than others and need supports and services. The most vulnerable children and youth may be in the care of government or a relative or live in some other guardianship arrangement because their parents are unwilling or unable to care for them.

My role as the Representative for Children and Youth is to provide oversight to the programs and services for vulnerable children and youth delivered primarily by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, through other government ministries and agencies, and indirectly through a network of non-government agencies and contract service organizations. My Office seeks to support vulnerable children and youth and promote better outcomes by:

- providing information, support and advice to children, youth and their families, and at times, direct advocacy support to children and youth, to help them navigate their way through the child- and youth-serving system and to address issues and concerns;
- monitoring the overall system and ensuring public accountability; and
- undertaking the review and investigation of critical injuries and deaths of children receiving reviewable government services.

This service plan is based on the foundations of last year's plan, and builds on the broad themes that I set to guide the work of my Office:

- fairness and equal opportunity for all children and youth across the province;
- enhanced attention and effort by the province to meet the highest standard of duty of care for children and youth under its guardianship; and
- greater attention by government to integrate, coordinate and improve services to prevent critical injury or deaths of children and youth and to reduce their exposure to violence.

These themes will continue to provide direction to the work of my Office in the coming years, with the overall goal of improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth. They will also provide focus to the specific strategies and activities of the Office's advocacy, research and review and investigation programs.

The Advocacy program will continue to build and enhance its services to ensure that children and youth in all regions of the province have access to advocacy support and advice. To increase awareness of child rights generally, and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, specifically, my Office will maintain its partnerships with the Society for Children and Youth of BC, the BC Centre for Safe Schools and Communities and all school boards in B.C. to deliver the Child Rights Public Awareness Campaign.

The Advocacy team is frequently asked to support children, youth and their families involved in the family law system. My September 2011 report, *So Many Plans, So Little Stability: A Child's Need for Security*, recommended that standard information about an applicant's background – including a criminal record check and whether the applicant has past or present involvement in a child protection matter – be placed before the family law court when a non-parent is applying for custody of a child. I will continue to advocate for change and work with the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Ministry of Attorney General to ensure that family law reform takes into account child welfare and safety matters when caregivers make applications for custody.

Research, Evaluation and Audit is based on a strong program of objective, evidence-based and child-centred research, review and assessment to identify and recommend improvements to the child- and youth-serving system to promote better outcomes for vulnerable children and youth. My Office will continue to partner with experts at other organizations including Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, the University of British Columbia, the University of Toronto, the University of Western Ontario, and the McCreary Centre Society. These partnerships broaden and strengthen the research capacity of my Office and have resulted in the production of a broad range of materials, constructive advice and research reports. A secondary benefit of such initiatives is that they provide an opportunity for post-secondary students to become engaged in the child- and youth-serving field and strengthen future research capacity.

My Office will also continue to seek out and engage youth directly and obtain their input and feedback on the development and delivery of services, benefiting both the work of the Office and the personal development and capacity of youth.

We have built a solid program for undertaking the review, and, when required, investigation, of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving services that are reviewable under my mandate. An important part of this program is conducting aggregate reviews such as the review on the deaths of children under the age of two (*Fragile Lives, Fragmented Systems: Strengthening Supports for Vulnerable Infants*, January 2011), and a review of self harm injuries and suicide deaths which is underway. These reviews provide a window of examination into important issues affecting the overall health and well-being of children in British Columbia.

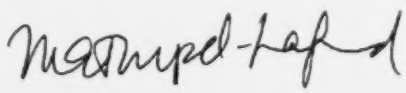
The astounding disparity between outcomes for Aboriginal children and other children and youth in B.C. makes it imperative that my Office continue to focus special attention and dedicated effort on the circumstances of Aboriginal children and youth. As well, I remain concerned about child poverty in B.C. Child poverty has a profound impact on an individual child's development, and on British Columbia as a whole given the significant and long-term costs to society of the effects of poverty. The province continues to have the highest child poverty rate in Canada and I continue to call on government to act and engage all parties in dealing with this issue.

The past year saw a long-awaited turning point in my interaction with government with the forging of a new constructive relationship between my Office and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. There is a natural tension between an independent oversight body and the agencies for which it provides oversight, but in the last year my Office and the ministry began to develop a true sense of partnership based on a common vision of children and youth at the forefront.

The importance of understanding the impact of services and programs provided by the child- and youth-serving system in improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth continues to be a paramount consideration of my work. An initiative is underway with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to identify performance indicators and outcomes for assessing the impact of services and programs. As well, I am committed to continuing the collaboration with the Provincial Health Officer - begun in 2010 with the release of the *Growing Up in B.C.* report - to monitor and track the health and well-being of B.C.'s children and youth.

April 2012 marks the five-year anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth. As mandated by the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, a review of the functions of the Representative by the Standing Committee is required within five years of the coming-into-force of the legislation. That review is now underway by the all-party Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth. Any changes to the Act may have an impact on this service plan.

Yours respectfully,



Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth

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Overview

The Representative for Children and Youth

Since April 2007, the Representative for Children and Youth has been responsible for providing independent oversight and ensuring the public accountability of the child- and youth-serving system in British Columbia.

The creation of the position of the Representative for Children and Youth was a central recommendation of the April 2006 B.C. Children and Youth Review ('Hughes Review') undertaken by the Honourable Ted Hughes. The Hughes Review examined and made recommendations for reforming the child-serving system including recommending the establishment of the Representative as an independent Officer of the Legislature to provide oversight and to "push for improvements to the child welfare system" in the province. The Representative reports publicly to the Legislative Assembly through the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

The Representative

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth, was appointed on Nov. 27, 2006. She is a judge on leave from the Saskatchewan Provincial Court. She was a tenured professor of law at the Dalhousie University Faculty of Law, and had taught law at the University of Toronto, the University of Notre Dame and other universities. She holds a doctorate of law from Harvard Law School, a master's degree in international law from Cambridge University and a law degree from Osgoode Hall. She is a mother of four children and a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan.

Representative's Mandate

The Representative for Children and Youth has a three-part mandate:

Advocacy – *providing information, advice and support to children and youth, and their families, who need help in dealing with designated services.*

Advocacy services provided by the Office include encouraging and supporting vulnerable children and youth to speak for themselves and making them aware of the availability of experienced advocates who can assist them and advocate on their behalf. Advocacy staff will also support individuals by working with child- and youth-serving organizations to ensure the views and opinions of children and youth are not only sought, but actually heard and taken into consideration on issues that affect them. In many instances children and youth are unable to speak for themselves. In these situations, Office staff directly advocate for the young person, helping them to navigate the complex systems of support and ensuring that their voice is paramount in decisions being made about them. The Advocacy program also provides information, support and advice to adults who contact the Office for assistance.

Designated services are government-funded services or programs for children, youth and their families, including but not limited to: family support, child protection, foster care, adoption, guardianship, children and youth with disabilities, early childhood development and child care services, mental health and addiction services for children and youth, youth justice, and services for youth and young adults during their transition to adulthood.

As well, the Office's advocacy team promotes and encourages the development of community advocacy organizations through outreach, information, education and support. It engages youth directly to hear about their concerns and obtain their input on how child and youth services can be made more responsive.

Research, Evaluation and Audit – *monitoring the child- and youth-serving system, conducting research, reviewing the effectiveness and responsiveness of services and programs and reporting publicly on the findings.*

The Office identifies systemic issues, trends or themes from its monitoring and research activities related to government-funded services and programs for children and youth that require further review and evaluation. The Representative reports publicly on these more broadly defined – or systemic – themes including issuing reports that make recommendations for improvements to services and programs. In addition, the Representative closely monitors themes that emerge from advocacy cases, meetings, correspondence and public engagements. These are all opportunities to 'take the temperature' of the systems of support for vulnerable children and youth.

Research projects undertaken by the Representative are designed to contribute to a better understanding of the issues affecting vulnerable children and youth and how outcomes can be improved. Wherever possible and feasible, the Representative collaborates with other public bodies, agencies and post-secondary institutions in conducting research activities. This ensures that the Representative benefits from the knowledge and experience of others and that a broad and integrated perspective is provided.

Critical Injury and Death Reviews and Investigations – *reviewing and investigating critical injuries and deaths of children and youth who have received reviewable services in the year prior to the occurrence of a critical injury or death.*

The objective of this work is to determine whether the services or programs received by the child or youth may have contributed in any way to the injury or death of a child, and to recommend improvements to service, practice or policy aimed at preventing future tragedies.

In addition to the opportunity for learning, the results of the Representative's investigations fulfill a critical public accountability function by providing an independent, external analysis of circumstances and events. The focus on the perspective of the needs of the child or youth is central to the Representative's approach. Applying this lens informs a different kind of analysis than is typically conducted in an internal review process carried out by the Ministry of Children and Family Development or other agencies.

Reviewable services are services or programs under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and include mental health and addiction services for children, among others.

***Representative for Children and Youth Act*, Section 6, Representative's Duties**

The representative is responsible for performing the following functions in accordance with this Act:

(a) support, assist, inform and advise children and their families respecting designated services, which activities include, without limitation,

  (i) providing information and advice to children and their families about how to effectively access designated services and how to become effective self advocates with respect to those services,

  (ii) advocating on behalf of a child receiving or eligible to receive a designated service, and

  (iii) supporting, promoting in communities and commenting publicly on advocacy services for children and their families with respect to designated services;

(b) monitor, review, audit and conduct research on the provision of a designated service by a public body or director for the purpose of making recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of that service, and comment publicly on any of these functions;

(c) review, investigate and report on the critical injuries and deaths of children as set out in Part 4;

(d) perform any other prescribed functions.

Fulfilling the Mandate

To be effective in meeting its mandate, the Office needs the trust and confidence of both the public and the child-serving system. Trust and confidence in the Office is created by 1) the legislated independence of the Representative, 2) a child-centred focus on supporting children and youth, and 3) the integrity and professionalism of the Office in carrying out its duties and responsibilities.

Independence

The independence of the Office is enshrined in the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, which provides the Representative with independent oversight authority and the responsibility for advocating for children and youth to ensure their rights are upheld, interests considered and voices heard by child-serving agencies in issues and decisions affecting them. The Representative does not report through any government ministry, but is accountable to British Columbians, reporting to the Legislative Assembly through the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

Child-Centred Focus

The Representative and her staff are at all times guided by a child-centred focus – this means that the child's best interests are the paramount consideration in all actions and decisions.

The guiding principles governing the work of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth are:

- Children and youth have a right to be protected and kept safe
- The child or youth's needs and interests, now and in the future, are the focus
- Children are respected and valued as individuals in their own right, with their own interests and abilities
- Children and youth have the right to participate and be heard in decisions affecting them
- All children and youth are entitled to an equal standard of care and protection and access to consistent, timely, and responsive services and supports
- Children and youth are empowered and given the opportunity to reach their full potential
- Families are the best environment for raising a child
- Parents and extended family have the primary responsibility for a child
- Society has a collective responsibility for providing resources and services for children, youth and their families, in particular supports for vulnerable children and youth to ensure access to equal opportunities.

Operating Principles and Values

The effectiveness of the Office depends on how it carries out its duties and responsibilities. The values of the Office reflect its mandate and its vision to be an organization that is highly valued for the role it plays in upholding the rights of vulnerable children and youth and for promoting improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families.

At all times, staff are guided by the highest standards of ethical and professional behaviour, and are individually and collectively responsible for upholding the following values:

- *Respect* – staff are respectful in all their dealings with others; they accept differing views and approaches and in interactions with children and youth strive to be accessible and easy to approach, calm, helpful and emphatic.
- *Integrity* – staff are honest and open and conduct themselves in an unbiased and consistent manner. They demonstrate honesty and are trustworthy.
- *Fairness* – staff ensure fairness by providing all those impacted by their work the opportunity to be heard and views considered.
- *Competence* – staff are knowledgeable and have the required expertise, skills and understanding to effectively perform their work.
- *Critical Thinking* – staff demonstrate an evidence-based approach to their work. They are critical thinkers, who actively seek out facts and information, consider differing opinions, undertake a thorough analysis and remain open to new information.
- *Collaboration* – staff endeavour to build a greater understanding of the B.C. child and youth serving system and identified opportunities for improving the system among all stakeholders.
- *Accountability* – staff are clear about what they do, how they do it and how they will assess performance.

Focus on Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal children and youth are over-represented in B.C.'s child protection system and under-represented in many systems of support. They often face challenges resulting in extreme vulnerabilities. Supporting and assisting Aboriginal children and youth is a particular focus of the Representative's Office.

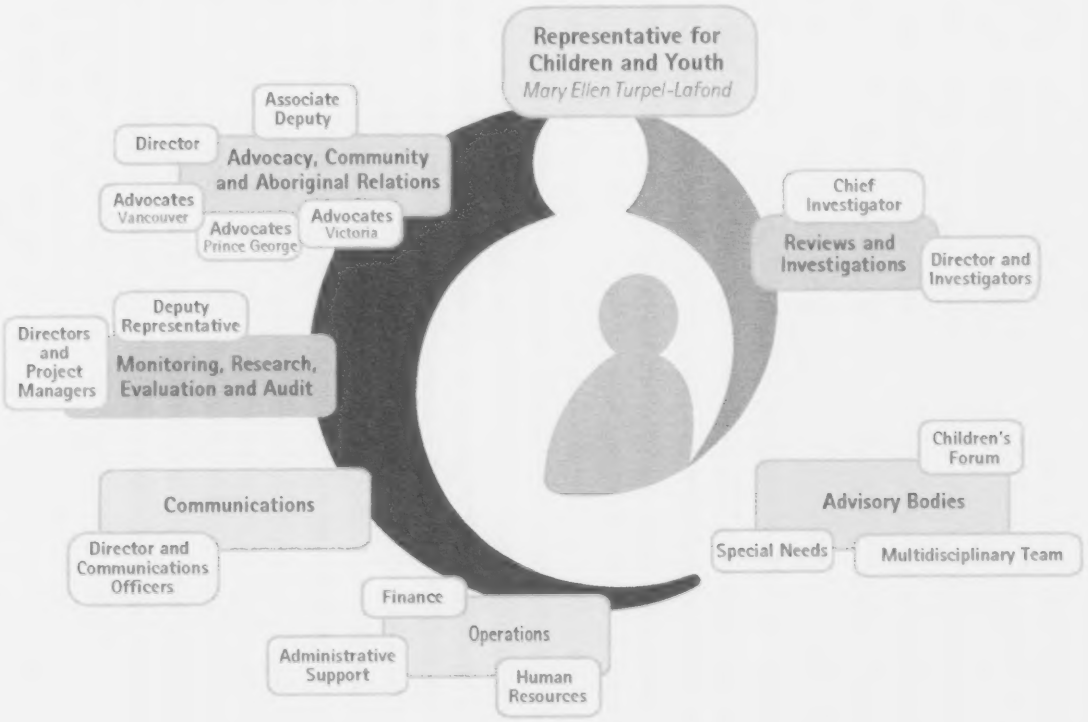
The Office collaborates with and establishes partnerships with Aboriginal communities to deliver outreach and advocacy services and provide support for initiatives that improve results for Aboriginal children and youth. Memoranda of Understanding exist between the Representative's Office and several Aboriginal organizations including the First Nations

Leadership Council and the Métis Nation of British Columbia, to explore and discuss the current state of Aboriginal children and youth who live outside the parental home or community; the First Nations Directors' Forum (comprised of directors of delegated agencies) to facilitate information sharing and communication on services to children and youth receiving services from these organizations; and the First Nations Education Steering Committee to support information sharing on educational attainment and outcomes for Aboriginal children across B.C.

The Office also partners and works with the provincial and federal government to address issues related to Aboriginal children and youth receiving government services.

Enhanced engagement with Aboriginal children and youth, Aboriginal leadership, delegated Aboriginal agencies, and Aboriginal community networks across B.C. will continue to be a goal of the Office over the coming years. Only through meaningful engagement with Aboriginal organizations across British Columbia will there be opportunities to collect and disseminate the required data and to address systemic barriers for the benefit of vulnerable Aboriginal children and youth.

Organizational Structure



Planning Context

Current Environment

Most children and youth in British Columbia grow up in homes where they are safe and healthy, and they experience a stable environment and circumstances that support their development. Some children and youth, however, live in environments and experience circumstances that are not optimal to their development and that affect their safety, health and well-being. Living outside the parental home, poverty, abuse, neglect, addictions, or coping with special needs can all contribute to less stability and hope for the future. Strong systems of support can improve the outcomes for these children and ensure that they have equal opportunity to develop to their potential.

Challenges

- B.C. has a significant population of vulnerable children. In 2010/11, approximately 14,800 children lived outside the parental home and about 57 per cent of those were in care of the government. As of September 2011, 8,177 children were in care. The situation is more profound for Aboriginal children. Just eight per cent of B.C.'s child and youth population is Aboriginal, but more than 55 per cent of children and youth in care are Aboriginal. About 1 in 16 Aboriginal children are in care compared to 1 in 100 of the total B.C. child and youth population. The number of children and youth in care declined by 19 per cent over the 10-year period between 2001/02 and 2010/11. Over this same period, however, the number of Aboriginal children and youth in care has increased by eight per cent.
- Children and youth who are in care or receiving services from the child-serving system are more vulnerable than the general population. They are more likely to be less healthy, less educated, live in poverty, experience family violence and/or sexual and emotional abuse, have a higher incidence of special needs, behavioural issues or mental illness, experience a higher level of incarceration, and are more likely to be dependent on income assistance. Again the situation is more profound for Aboriginal children and youth, as these trends are compounded. Aboriginal children and youth in care have poorer educational outcomes than non-Aboriginal children and youth in care,[1] and are more likely to become involved with the youth justice system than non-Aboriginal youth who have been in care.[2]

  Particular attention is required at all levels to improve services and programs and enhance systems of support to address the plight of vulnerable children and youth, especially Aboriginal children and youth, in order to achieve better outcomes.

[1] Health and Well-Being of Children in Care in British Columbia – Educational Experience and Outcomes, Joint Special Report, Representative for Children and Youth, and Provincial Health Officer, May 2007.

[2] Kids, Crime and Care: Health and Well-Being of Children in Care in British Columbia – Youth Justice *Experiences and Outcomes*, Joint Special Report, Representative for Children and Youth, and Provincial Health Officer, February 2009.

- The population structure of British Columbia is changing. In the last decade, B.C. experienced a slight dip in the number of children aged 0 to 14 years. That trend has now reversed, and from 2010 onward this population will grow at a rate of about 1.3 to 1.5 per cent annually. A slight decline in the youth population is expected to continue over the next few years, but that trend will also reverse toward the end of the decade. The growth of the Aboriginal child and youth population is increasing at a much higher rate than the overall child and youth population in B.C. Immigration is also increasing, particularly from Asian countries. Overall, the B.C. population continues to age (the 65 years and older population is projected to increase by over four per cent per year for the next several years).

  The growing Aboriginal child and youth population has significant implications for the child- and youth-serving system, particularly given their high levels of vulnerability. As well, the increasing proportion of immigrant children and youth underscores the importance of building accessible and culturally appropriate services that effectively meet the needs of immigrant populations. The fundamental change in the population structure means that an increasing number of elderly will be supported by a decreasing number of young earners. Continued and growing pressure on the health care system has the potential to significantly impact the availability of funds for other public services, including services to children, youth and their families.

- The global economy continues to experience turbulence. While B.C. has weathered the turmoil better than most jurisdictions, the province's economic performance is not expected to be as strong as in the past decade given the impact of the global economic conditions. The government continues to project that it will return to balanced budgets by 2013/14.

  The economic situation has implications for services to children, youth and their families, because times of slower economic growth can sometimes mean decreased focus and resources dedicated to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in society.

- Children and youth continue to be the victims of violence. Some children and youth are subject to injury or even death as a result of violence and those exposed to it often suffer emotional and behavioural disturbances. Through its work, the Office has become aware that key aspects of the social safety net are not working well for some families and children, and there is a growing concern regarding the incidence of adolescents experiencing physical and sexual assault at the hands of both strangers and those known to them.

  Continued collaboration, cooperation and coordination among all levels and programs of government is needed to ensure that children and youth are free from violence.

- There is an increasing demand for responsive and effective services for children and youth with special needs and their families. Issues regarding services to children and

youth with special needs include lack of advocacy support, insufficient funding, lack of appropriate resources, multiple service delivery points and little coordination, poor management of complex cases, and lack of processes and programs to transition youth to adulthood.

The increased awareness of the rights and interests of special needs children and youth, the expanded scope of what is considered special needs, improved diagnoses and greater recognition and understanding of our responsibility to support all children in an inclusive fashion have significant impacts on programs and services for children and youth with special needs.

- According to Statistics Canada, B.C. has the highest child poverty rate in Canada at 12 per cent, 2.5 per cent above the national rate. Despite a trend downward, B.C. has had the highest rate for seven years in a row. Of critical concern is the impact that poverty has on the day-to-day lives of vulnerable children and families, and its impact on ensuring equal access to all children to services, programs and opportunities to succeed. Children in families coping with poverty are at a significant disadvantage. They often lack nourishing food and have poorer school performance and are challenged by impaired language development, reading and memory skills, and high degrees of stress and isolation. Often these children live in poor housing in impoverished neighbourhoods with few social supports.

  B.C.'s child poverty rate underscores the critical need for all parties to come together to develop an integrated, coordinated and focused child poverty plan to address and reduce poverty in the province.

- There is a lack of defined outcomes and comprehensive information about the impact of services by the child- and youth-serving system on the very children and youth it serves. An ongoing challenge is how to improve our understanding of how well the child- and youth-serving system is performing.

- Despite recent efforts (such as the Representative's and Provincial Health Officer's joint report, *Growing Up in B.C.*) to improve our understanding of the current state of children and youth, further effort is needed to understand what is working and what is not working, in order to make changes to the child-serving system that will improve conditions, circumstances and ultimately outcomes for vulnerable children and youth in B.C.

- Broader awareness of the rights of children is essential to establish the foundation for building resiliency and capacity in children and youth. Promotion and education about the rights of children and engaging and empowering youth are essential to supporting their personal development and their growth into independent, responsible and contributing adult members of society.

Vision, Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measurement

Vision

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth is highly valued for championing the fundamental rights of vulnerable children and youth, and for promoting improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families that result in better lives for children and youth.

Goals

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth has three main goals:

1. Advocacy supports vulnerable children in having their rights and interests protected and upheld, their voices heard and considered, and being active participants in decisions affecting them.
2. The identification of opportunities for strengthening the child- and youth-serving system improves outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and the quality of services provided to them.
3. The examination of critical injuries and deaths contributes to ensuring that children and youth are safe from violence, abuse and neglect and exposure to violence.

Objectives and Strategies

Advocacy

Goal 1 – Advocacy supports vulnerable children in having their rights and interests protected and upheld, their voices heard and considered and being active participants in decisions affecting them.

Objective 1.1 – British Columbians are informed of and understand the rights of children and youth, and are aware of services available to support vulnerable children and youth.

Strategies

The Office will:

- inform and educate children and youth about the advocacy support and advice provided by the Office and how to access it, and actively promote the services available to support vulnerable children and youth;
- build public awareness and understanding of the rights of children and youth through disseminating publications, and hosting presentations and workshops in communities and with community and child and youth organizations;
- work with community partners to build understanding and engage communities in supporting vulnerable children, youth and their families, and advocating for them.

Objective 1.2 – Agencies providing child and youth services respect the rights of vulnerable children and youth, and promote children and youth in effectively participating in decisions about their lives.

Strategies

The Office will:

- work with child- and youth-serving agencies to ensure that consideration of the rights of children and youth are integrated into policies and practices, and that children and youth are active participants in the decision-making process;
- work with government bodies and agencies who serve vulnerable children and youth to review and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of their dispute resolution processes in achieving timely and fair resolution of disagreements, and advocate for changes where appropriate.

Objective 1.3 – Children and youth have access to expanded and enhanced advocacy supports and services.

Strategies

The Office will:

- continue to deliver expanded and enhanced advocacy supports and services to children and youth in relation to designated government-funded services and programs;
- continue its work with communities to provide outreach, training, education and other resources in support of the development of comprehensive community-based advocacy programs.

Objective 1.4 – Children and youth have access to advocacy services that are responsive to their unique cultures, beliefs, values and needs.

Strategies

The Office will:

- consult with young people about their needs, interests and concerns about the child- and youth-serving system and engage them in identifying ways to ensure that services are responsive;
- continue to consult with communities, including First Nations communities and Aboriginal peoples, to identify their needs for advocacy services and collaborate with them on the design and implementation of community advocacy programs that meet their needs;
- review and consider services and programs currently available; consult with immigrant communities to identify their needs for services; and work to design and implement relevant and effective advocacy services for British Columbia's growing population of immigrant and refugee children and youth.

Research, Evaluation and Audit

Goal 2 – The identification of opportunities for strengthening the child- and youth-serving system improves outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and the quality of services provided to them.

Objective 2.1 – Identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for system improvement by ongoing monitoring of the quality of services to and the outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.

Strategies

The Office will:

- develop and publish reports monitoring the circumstances of vulnerable children and youth in the province;
- raise public awareness of the circumstances of vulnerable children and youth;
- monitor the delivery of designated services to children, youth and their families;
- monitor the delivery of designated services to Aboriginal children and youth and their families.

Objective 2.2 – Examine the responsiveness and effectiveness of designated services for children and youth and make recommendations for improving service quality and outcomes for vulnerable children and youth by conducting research, reviews and audits.

Strategies

The Office will:

- undertake reviews and audits of identified designated services for children and youth and prepare public reports on the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of these services and programs;
- undertake research into emerging trends and areas of interest and concern within the child- and youth-serving system;
- collaborate with universities and other independent bodies to broaden and strengthen the Office's research capacity and ability to thoroughly and comprehensively examine a range of issues relating to the child- and youth-serving system;
- identify, report on and make recommendations respecting system-wide issues that arise out of the work of the Office;

- support the ongoing monitoring and reporting on the state of children and youth in the province, including the preparation of such reports as *Growing up in B.C.*, to provide an understanding of how well children are doing and where improvements are needed;
- engage and collaborate with other independent Officers of the Legislature and public bodies on matters of importance for children and youth;
- report to the Standing Committee on Children and Youth, and to the public, on the status of recommendations made to improve the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of services and programs.

Child Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigation

Goal 3 – The examination of critical injuries and deaths contributes to ensuring that children and youth are safe from violence, abuse and neglect and exposure to violence.

Objective 3.1 – Review and investigate the critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services to inform improvements to services and to aid in the prevention of similar injuries or deaths in the future.

Strategies

The Office will:

- establish and maintain an effective and accountable child critical injury and child death review and investigation process to meet the Representative's statutory responsibility, including reporting publicly on investigations and on aggregate reviews;
- work collaboratively with other public bodies to promote an integrated and accountable systemic approach to reviewing child deaths and injuries and to learning from reviews and investigations;
- develop and maintain a network among child critical injury and death review agencies to explore opportunities for collaboration and learning;
- research and identify best practices to inform its child critical injury and death review and investigation process and to provide advice to other public bodies;
- chair periodic meetings of the Children's Forum (includes the Chief Coroner, the Ombudsperson, the Public Guardian and Trustee, the Provincial Health Officer, and senior leaders from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Representative's Office) to collaborate on issues relating to critical injuries and deaths of children in British Columbia.

Measuring Performance

The Office measures its performance through tracking key performance indicators related to its mandated services and program areas. The work of the Office does not lend itself to outcome-based measurement. The Office does not deliver services directly, nor does it have direct administrative responsibility for the child- and youth-serving system in the province. Through advocacy, investigation and research roles the Office can make strong recommendations for needed change, and monitor the system's compliance with its own standards, and against national and international practice expectations. However, changes in the system cannot be directly attributed to the Office. The Office provides support to children, youth and their families in dealing with the child-serving system and makes recommendations to the system on changes to improve designated and reviewable services, but it is up to the system itself to address and act on the issues raised and recommendations made by the Office. The mandated activities of the Office are intended to contribute to improving the overall well-being of vulnerable children and youth in British Columbia.

The following table lists the Office's key performance indicators by program area and by the long-term outcome that the Office's activities are intended to contribute to achieving:

Program Area	Key Performance Indicators for Office of the Representative for Children and Youth	Contributing to Achievement of Long-term Outcomes
Advocacy Services	Advocacy cases per year/by month/by region	There is awareness and respect for rights of children and youth among all British Columbians. Children and youth have their voices heard and interests considered.
	Public awareness activities and advocacy information and education sessions – publications produced and distributed; presentations hosted; children's rights workshops; communities visited; agencies/ organizations consulted with; partnerships	
Monitoring, Research, Evaluation and Audit	Monitoring and review activities	Designated services are effective, responsive and accountable ultimately improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.
	Public Reports – RCY and Joint Reports	
	Partnerships and Collaborations	
Critical Injury and Deaths	Deaths and critical injuries reported to RCY; cases selected for review; aggregate reviews	Reviewable services are effective, responsive and accountable ultimately improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.
	Investigations	
Outreach and Engagement Activities – conferences, speaking engagements, meetings, media requests, on-line presence, annual Awards of Excellence		Citizens, policy makers and service providers have greater knowledge of the state of children and youth in the province and system leading to improvements to achieve better outcomes.

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